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INFO RUEHAAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 3320
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RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 3936
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 3799
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 1925
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7173
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0133
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 0058
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0811
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 001740

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TAGS: PREF PHUM PREL AF TI UZ

SUBJECT: UZBEKS THREATEN TO DEPORT AFGHAN REFUGEES

REF: TASHKENT 1664

Classified By: Poloff Tim Buckley for reasons 1.4 (B,D)

¶1. (C) Summary. United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Resident Representative in Uzbekistan Fikret Akcura informed DCM on the evening of October 4 that the Uzbek mission in Geneva may make a public statement October 5 at the UNHCR Executive Committee meeting that it no longer recognizes UNDP's authority and is invalidating refugee documents. The GOU says it will deport refugees unless they obtain valid Uzbek visas. UNDP is increasing the size of a reassessment team visiting in October in an effort to speed up the reassessment process. This may be a GOU effort to force UNDP to find a quick solution to the refugee issue. End summary.

UNDP DOCUMENTS "NO LONGER VALID"

¶2. (C) UNDP Resident Representative Fikret Akcura informed DCM that on the evening of October 4 the Deputy Charge d'Affaires of Uzbekistan's Geneva mission informed UNHCR officials that the UNDP-issued documents carried by Afghan refugees are "null and void". He added that unless they obtain valid Uzbekistan visas the refugees will be deported. (Note: Per reftel, the cost of obtaining visas is prohibitive. End note). The Uzbek diplomat in Geneva also noted that the GOU no longer considers UNDP an authorized representative of UNHCR in Uzbekistan. Akcura told DCM that, since the last meeting (see reftel), there have been four or five new known cases of deportations of Afghan refugees, however some of them may have found a way back into Uzbekistan. Akcura added that noone in the GOU has double-tracked the Uzbeks' message with him in Tashkent.

PUBLIC STATEMENT FORTHCOMING?

¶3. (C) Akcura said that the Uzbeks may make a public statement on their policy as early as an October 5 Executive Committee meeting of the UNHCR in Geneva. Given the increased urgency of the situation, UNDP is assembling a larger team than originally planned to reassess the status of the Afghan refugees (see reftel), which will speed up the reclassification process. The reassessment is still expected during October, after which time there will be a more

accurate list of the numbers of Afghan refugees and their possible eligibility for resettlement programs.

COMMENT

¶4. (C) Despite the increased rhetoric from the GOU, this may actually be an effort to force the UNDP to find a rapid solution to the refugee issue. However, the situation is already difficult for the Afghan refugees and the GOU appears increasingly serious about removing them from the country as quickly as possible.

NORLAND